Analog and Digital, Continuous and Discrete

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Abstract

Representation is central to contemporary theorizing about the mind/brain. But the nature of representation--both in the mind/brain and more generally--is a source of ongoing controversy. One way of categorizing representational types is to distinguish between the analog and the digital: the received view is that analog representations vary smoothly, while digital representations vary in a step-wise manner. I argue that this characterization is inadequate to account for the ways in which representation is used in cognitive science; in its place, I suggest an alternative taxonomy. I will defend and extend David Lewis's account of analog and digital representation, distinguishing analog from continuous representation, as well as digital from discrete representation. I will argue that the distinctions available in this four-fold account accord with representational features of theoretical interest in cognitive science more usefully than the received analog/digital dichotomy.

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